

# SELECTED LESSONS FROM EVALUATIONS OF RESPONSES TO COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES:

## *Implications for the Kosovo Crisis*

by

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The Kosovo crisis now (mid-May 1999) embraces much of the Balkans one way or another. Various proposals are being mooted for international and regional action to secure a stable peace once the conflict has concluded. The length of the conflict, the extent of casualties and population displacement, the amount of physical destruction, the post-conflict sovereignty configuration, and the lingering political and social effects on the states most affected, are all unpredictable at this moment.

The purpose of this note is to identify lessons drawn from evaluations of other complex humanitarian emergencies (CHEs) that might usefully be kept in mind while coping with the Kosovo crisis. Applicability of any individual lesson will depend, of course, on how the crisis develops, how it is resolved, and what post-conflict political architecture emerges. The lessons (and observations about the region) have been culled from evaluations and other materials by CDIE, the Department for International Development (UK), OECD/DAC, UNHCR/WFP, the Directorate General of International Cooperation (Netherlands), IBRD/OED, Danida, the International Crisis Group (ICG), and this author.

### *A. Crisis Management*

**1. Coordination.** *The Kosovo crisis demands an effective coordination mechanism.* Virtually all CHE evaluations cite inadequate donor coordination as causing serious problems--inefficiencies, waste, lost leverage, etc. CHEs typically have unusually complex coordination problems, with very large numbers of multi- and bilateral donors and NGOs, in a context of contested and/or collapsed governance. A different level of complexity arises where (e.g. in Kosovo, Bosnia, Somalia, Cambodia) external military organizations are also involved. Coordination has ranged from voluntary, committee-like structures, to more hierarchical or command systems involving lead agencies or even a UN or other sanctioned authority with powers of direction (as in Cambodia, Bosnia). Post-conflict Kosovo appears likely to have a (several-year?) interim international administration under which a centrally guided coordination system would be appropriate. Of all recent CHEs, the Cambodian and Bosnian experiences have the most relevant lessons in this regard, especially concerning the security/political/economic interfaces, and the exercise of the authorized powers. (There has been extensive independent and internal agency evaluation of the international administration experience in these two cases, especially respecting Cambodia.)

**2. Monitoring.** *A central monitoring/data collection unit should be set up to serve all donors.* CHE information-sharing and monitoring systems have also been evaluated severely. A central unit collecting and analyzing socioeconomic and program information, serving all donors (again, along the Cambodian and/or Bosnian models), is invaluable to ensure all donors are on the same wavelength. Close monitoring and coordinated response have been found essential for assessing aid needs, avoiding work at cross-purposes, identifying recipient groups no longer needing emergency aid, transiting from relief to reconstruction, and designing and adjusting appropriate economic policies. The Rwanda experience demonstrated that good information on the concerns and expectations among encamped refugees, and on the power and leadership structures in the camps, is critical for maintaining orderly relations of confidence among refugees, assistance authorities, and host governments.

**3. Refugee Sustenance.** *Local food distribution organizations may need close monitoring to avoid factional diversion or politicization.* Based on the generally successful and rapid humanitarian agency response record under many different circumstances, it is unlikely that malnutrition or disease threats will become significant complications of the current crisis, with two important caveats. First, between internal displacement, exposure to ethnic-cleansing violence, and the bombing of supply infrastructure, those remaining inaccessible inside Kosovo could suffer severe privation, depending on how long the conflict lasts. Second, Kosovo, Albania, and Macedonia each have had deeply divided political factions and parties. In similar cases (e.g. Ethiopia, Sudan) factions that controlled food aid distribution have withheld food from entitled populations under rival factions. Thus far, the political dynamics in Albania and Macedonia have reportedly facilitated rather than hindered refugee aid distribution. Given the fragile politics in both countries, and the stresses being generated by the crisis, the integrity of emergency aid distribution should be closely monitored in this respect. The problem could arise in Kosovo, unless distribution is well controlled by external agencies, if the post-conflict arrangements retain Kosovo's ethnic Serb minority.

**4. Refugee Repatriation.** *Refugees may require incentives for returning home and disincentives for remaining outside.* Generally, the longer encampment or temporary foreign residence has lasted, the more refugees have become unwilling to return, as exemplified in Mozambique. A combination of incentives to return to Kosovo and disincentives to remaining outside may be required if NATO's expressed optimism about early return is not borne out.

**5. World Bank Coordination of Reconstruction.** *Several mechanisms can be used to strengthen Bank performance.* The international community has recently relied on the Bank to take the lead in reconstruction, monitoring and other non-political/military functions mentioned here. The Bank's own evaluation of its experience concluded that its effectiveness had varied, depending to a considerable extent on senior management's level of interest and commitment, as reflected in (a) the size and authorities of the in-country Resident Representative office, (b) the speed of headquarters processing and the exceptions allowed for cutting bureaucratic corners, and (c) the size of administrative budget allocated. The Bank's performance in some cases has been enhanced by (a) receipt of (grant) trust funds from one or another donor interested in inducing and supporting a larger Bank effort than might otherwise be the case, and (b) strong advocacy, by one or more members of the Board, of maximum Bank performance.

## *B. Transition and Links from Relief to Development*

**1. Relief to Development.** *USAID should avoid funding and operations discontinuities in transition.* Transiting from relief to development has created implementation and funding gaps for USAID. Relief funding and implementation is allowed considerable flexibility compared with the procedural and conceptual complexity and slower pace of normal development operations. As a result, transition has caused funding gaps and program interruptions (e.g. in Mozambique) between phase-out of relief funding and phase-in of development funding. The separate systems (relief and development) may have to operate simultaneously if some areas in a country remain in emergency status while other areas stabilize more quickly. The problem of land mines in Kosovo could necessitate operating in both modes at once. Projects undertaken as rapid transition responses should be substantively linked with longer run reconstruction and development programs, where feasible. This requires closer coordination among USAID's units responsible for different aid categories and operations.

**2. Resettlement Planning.** *Realistic resettlement planning should already be underway.* Although the things returning refugees will need for initial resettlement may seem obvious, planning for resettlement has often been deficient in practice, based on unrealistic assumptions and inadequate information on, or analysis of, the conditions prevailing in the repatriation destinations. (Evaluations of these problems in Cambodia, Mozambique, and Haiti may be helpful.) If repatriation should begin as early as this coming autumn (as NATO spokesmen have asserted), planning, preparation, and financial provision should now already be underway, including mobilization for community and home demining. A repatriation package suitable for return at the onset of winter will have to include housing reconstruction (fraught with problems of finance and implementation), wherewithal for sustenance until the next harvest, restocking for next season's cultivation, household restocking and fuel, livestock restocking, and perhaps cash (if the press accounts are correct that departing Kosovars have been stripped of their money and valuables), etc. Contingency planning for winterizing the camps, necessary if early return proves infeasible, should also be undertaken immediately.

**3. Negotiation/Settlement Agenda.** *Economic dimensions should be included as an important part of settlement negotiations and arrangements.* The rehabilitation process may be impeded if the conflict settlement negotiations and arrangements focus only on political and security dimensions, giving insufficient attention to economic implications and the post-conflict economic policy frame and management requirements. Development was delayed and opportunities missed in Cambodia because the interim UN administration interpreted its mandate--against the advice of its economics unit--as limiting its economic development activity authority in order not to preempt decisions that should (in this narrow reading) be left to the successor national authorities yet to be established. The economic recovery of the resettled Kosovar population should not be delayed by giving any interim international administration an economic scope that is too restricted.

**4. Economy Distortions.** *Monitor intervention effects to detect inflationary and other distortion impact needing coordinated donor response.* Local expenditures by large numbers of

international military, civilian, and NGO personnel can have major positive and negative effects on fragile crisis and post-conflict economies. These expenditures can help stimulate recovery of local production and service capacities, but can also have inflationary and distortionary effects on local housing markets, on wage levels of scarce local professional and technical cadres, and on the wages (supplements) and perks of civil servants seconded as aid-project staff. Well-positioned officials and other elite may capture much of this expenditure, producing new, large income disparities and consequent resentment. The obverse may also be a problem, viz. economic downturn and employment loss when stabilization allows major reductions in external military and other personnel. Monitoring of such effects should be initiated right from the start.

**5. NGOs.** *Benefit from the lessons of NGOs in Croatia and Bosnia.* NGOs play major roles in CHEs. Although the DAC Expert Group on Evaluation has described the state of lesson-learning from CHE evaluations as methodological anarchy, some applicable experience can be identified, especially from the USAID project supporting development of local NGOs in Croatia and Bosnia: (a) NGOs emerging (often in response to the unprecedented availability of funds for civil society) from a society with shallow non-governmental sector experience should be encouraged with small initial grants for a testing period; (b) most Croatian/Bosnian NGOs were founded and run by women--mental health workers, teachers, etc.--responding to the emergency need to assist displaced families, and then to promote resettlement, normalization, and community reconciliation; (c) technical assistance is essential, and can bring even small NGOs to the point of effective management; (d) NGOs dedicated to individual beneficiary targets and activities (e.g. traumatized women, youth voluntarism, sports, family therapy, interethnic reconciliation, cultural revival) should not be pressed to move into new functions in which they lack expertise (e.g. microenterprise) merely because donor priorities have shifted; instead, NGO development should move into a second phase (strategic rather than ad hoc) of encouraging creation of sets of NGOs with complementary capabilities and objectives, suitable to the array of problems needing attention, community by community; (e) youth and women appear more ready than adult males to reconcile across ethnic lines; while this could also apply in Kosovo (if post-conflict Kosovo is not monoethnic), the bias toward youth and women target groups, to the neglect of adult males, needs correction for reconciliation to work; (f) long-term support for local NGOs from the ethnic-Albanian diaspora can be important for gradual phase-out of aid-dependence, but political capture of remittances can choke off such funds through disillusionment, as demonstrated in Croatia; (g) the ex-IRC local staffs in Croatia and Bosnia, having formed successor organizations of their own to continue as sources of technical assistance following termination of the IRC project (in January 1999), plus the staffs of some of the stronger NGOs in each country, could be valuable resources for aid-funded projects utilizing or assisting Kosovar (or other) local NGOs. The experience of agencies helping reconstruct housing in Bosnia (e.g. Mercy Corps International) may also be valuable in Kosovo. Finally, Kosovar NGOs that may be intact in refugee status, outside Kosovo, should be supported to ensure their survival pending return.

**6. Employment-Oriented Training.** *Train people in skills for which there is employment demand; link training with start-up capital.* Recovery activities need to be dovetailed to post-conflict economic realities. Job training of youth, women, and demobilized soldiers has in several cases been virtually fruitless where unemployment in the depressed economy remains high. Although opportunities for self-employment in microenterprise may also be limited, such

training may be more effective if linked with a program providing small seed capital. Demobilized soldiers who remain unemployed have often turned to destabilizing criminal activity.

**7. Safety Nets.** *Anticipate a need for aiding widow-headed households.* When the fate of the large numbers (100,000?) of missing males becomes known, Kosovo unfortunately may join the ranks of other CHE countries that have emerged with tragically distorted demography. Especially for Kosovo's large rural population, a major loss of adult males could create a severely disadvantaged group of widow-headed households. The need for effective safety-nets, and for restoring such households to economic viability, should be anticipated. Other disadvantaged groups needing tailored support may be the elderly, widower heads of households, the disabled, etc.

**8. Commodity Procurement.** *Maximize regional procurement to help stimulate economic recovery.* Maximizing purchases of aid-funded goods and services internally and from the affected neighboring countries (with an eye to the possible price effects, noted above) can contribute to regional employment and economic recovery and to the restoration of cross-border economic relations. This may require flexibility of procurement in the set of affected countries.

**9. High-Level Technocrat Training.** *Training of technocrats to manage post-conflict economic transition should begin immediately.* Reconstruction and transition to development in Kosovo is likely (under non-Yugoslav administration) to be accompanied by transition to a new set of economic institutions and rules of the game, mirroring Western European norms. Kosovo had developed considerable civil society institutional experience (mainly in social/cultural sectors) in the autonomy period of 1974-89. As has been the case in many CHEs, overall macroeconomic and sectoral policy design in recovery-cum-transition is likely to require conceptual and management skills in short supply, especially if pre-conflict professional and intellectual cadre have been targeted for deliberate elimination. Inadequate, or absence of, training of technocratic cadre while the conflicts were still underway, was identified as a significant oversight in some CHE cases. This point applies across the board to Kosovo where, at this time, the fate of many of the civil society leaders (from the 1974-89 period) is unknown. These cadre should be found, if possible, among the refugees, and readied for return to help revive the social infrastructure and prepare for economic recovery. A balance will be needed between foreign implementing agencies and contractors, on the one hand, and revived Kosovar organizations on the other, to avoid jeopardizing the revival through either overburdening the Kosovars or sinking them with overbearing disregard.

### *C. Political Effects*

**1. Aid Commodities are a Source of Power.** *Monitor for unintended political consequences of emergency aid distribution.* CDIE and other evaluations have noted that the emergency aid (especially food) distribution process can have unintended (and undesirable) political consequences. In several cases (especially Rwanda), control over final distribution reinforced the power of local authorities or factions, strengthening their relative position (during or after conflict), and facilitating their self-aggrandizing, often abusive, behavior toward the intended

non-combatant beneficiaries. Consequences of this sort would not be surprising under prevailing conditions in several countries in the region. In the Balkan context reconstruction aid will far exceed emergency sustenance aid in amount and in political consequences.

**2. Peace Conditionality.** *Use aid as an incentive for peaceaccord adherence and responsible governance.* There has been controversy over the proposition (asserted by, among others, the World Bank in its evaluation of its post-conflict experience) that donors could and should have more forcefully exerted the leverage they had in the initial post-conflict period of almost total dependence on external financing (and security). While the Bank study refers to governance functions (e.g. fiscal practices) within the normal scope of the Bank's mandate, the point also applies to the notion of peace conditionality, that is, the provision or withholding of aid flows being made dependant upon the local authorities' adherence to the political commitments embodied in the peace accords (or comparable instruments). Lack of donor consistency in this regard can undermine such potential (as was the case in Cambodia), another important reason for designing an effective coordination structure. The Bosnian experience in peace conditionality is perhaps the most pertinent for post-conflict Kosovo.

**3. Regional Destabilization.** *Non-project aid for budget support can help front-line states maintain domestic stability.* There is much concern that the Kosovo crisis may destabilize Albania and Macedonia through (among other things) the presence of the Kosovar refugees and the burdens imposed on the ability of the two governments to continue to finance and sustain the pre-crisis levels of service delivery to their citizens. Aid funds in the form of non-project budget support can help sustain pre-crisis domestic budget outlays; this could help to diminish the potential for ethnic polarization in Macedonia (e.g. by enabling the government to maintain pensions and civil service salaries) and for the deepening of the (so-called) left-right polarization in Albanian politics. Fast-disbursing aid flows may also be critical for sustaining the positions these governments have taken with respect to the conflict itself, a political point beyond the scope of this note. Understandings and commitments regarding the allocation of the local currency counterpart should be explicit and should be monitored to ensure compliance. Tranching should be considered to encourage compliance. Perhaps Macedonia can obtain fast-disbursing budget support from Taiwan rather than aid in project form.

**4. Destabilization from Resentment of Refugees.** *Keep refugee support standards modest in relation to host population standards.* Evaluations have stressed the importance of coping with political problems that have arisen in host countries when encampment extends for some considerable period (as may well be the case with the Kosovar refugees due to mines, housing destruction, etc.; one recent estimate assumed possibly 3-5 years, security considerations aside). One illustrative lesson: refugees should not be supported at a standard that evokes resentment among the host population. Resentment can also stem from refugee competition for scarce local employment. After resettlement, resentment could also arise if the country allocations of reconstruction aid are perceived as unfair or unjust.

May 25, 1999

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